

Both American Political Parties Have Serious Blindspots.  
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\223Liberals\224 or \223Progressives\224 care for the weak, persecuted, and downtrodden. Liberals see the world as inevitably progressing, step by step, from a harsh and violent past to a future that they believe will be civilized and caring.

Traditional Conservatives believe that without governance, people are violent, destructive, and dangerous. Their ideology rejects changing something that is working for something that they see as \223cloud cuckoo.\224 They worry about too much unnecessary legislation, creating a Nanny State that stifles initiative.

The United States needs both of these value systems. Liberals worry about injustice; conservatives worry about anarchy. Today, both are serious issues. But each has blind spots.

Liberals value all-inclusiveness, and are most concerned with helping \223underdogs.\224 They blame bad behavior on bad childhoods or poverty, downplaying the existing of evil (a term not liked). Conservatives, however, recognize evil, but romanticize the virtues of the past and see any leniency as weakness and a danger to society. The good old days, unfortunately, were not really such good old days.

My liberal colleagues value gender equality, religious tolerance, and the abolition of cruel and unusual punishments---very good values that I share. However, in today\222s intellectual dialogues, too many have a problem in separating out Islam, an everyday religion, from Islamo-fascism, an ideological offshoot that endangers all of us, including ordinary mainstream Muslims.

By defending Muslims as \223underdogs,\224 they avert their eyes from Islam\222s treatment of women, bigotry against all other religions, and brutality as a social norm. Instead, it has become chic to blame Muslim misbehavior and rage on the evils of European colonialism, the United States, and Israel. There is little criticism of the violence generated by perceived \223insulting Islam\224 or \223insulting the Prophet Mohammad.\224 Instead, many say we must censor ourselves to avoid this violence.

Conservatives who recognize the menace of Islamism sometimes go too far in condemning all Muslims, most of whom are not political. Although some over-the-top ultra-conservatives (Koran burners) are bigots who muddy the waters, the battle should not be about the private practice of Islam, but rather its totalitarian ideology.

There should be no difference between Liberals and Conservatives on totalitarianism, but unfortunately there is. Both American Liberals and Conservatives should be on the same page in defending liberal democracy (democracy governed by rule of law, separation of powers, free press, and equality of all citizens under the law). But they are not. They differ on their choice of enemies, often until almost too late.

Until World War I in 1914, almost everybody believed that progress would continue forever and that we would have an eternal brave new world. Then the war broke out and shattered the progressive dream. The rest of the century was spent in one gigantic ideological battle: liberal democracies of the west against their totalitarian enemies: Fascists, Nazis, Communists, and now Islamists. Liberal ideologues recognized the Fascists and Nazis as enemies, but too many bought into the cynical \223progressivism\224 of the Communists and it took far too long to disenchant them. Many are having the same difficulty in seeing Islamo-fascism as a totalitarian ideology.

Many Conservatives, to their discredit, initially admired Fascism and Nazism as systems restoring their societies to order after chaos. Even after learning how evil the Nazis were, they hoped that the Nazis and Communists would take each other out and insisted that we stay out of it. What terrible consequences there would have been if the US had not entered---and won---World War II.

Although we all saw the horror of concentration camps after we defeated the Nazis and Japanese, we did not see the horrors of the Soviet gulags until years later. Now we know the truth.

What both sides missed was that Nazis, Communists, and Islamists are neither left nor right. They are all enemies of Liberal Democracy, whom we must fight.

The wars of the 20th century are not yet over. We cannot just avert our eyes from today's newest totalitarianism, one that does more violence to innocent Muslim civilians than it does to us. Liberal Democracy is worth fighting for, and has history on its side.

686 words

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